

# AUSTIN SOFTWARE LEADER

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## NEW LEADERSHIP TAKES ASC TO THIRD GROWTH STAGE

by Emily Sopenky



Betty Otter-Nickerson, Chair,  
Austin Software Council

Usually, the chair of the Austin Software Council is an entrepreneur. Steve Vandegrift's startup is Activerse Inc. Becky Taylor's company is Terrace Mountain Systems.

While the new chair, Betty Otter-Nickerson, has the entrepreneurial bent, having helped grow the Austin site of BMC Software, Inc. from 50 employees to 500 in 6 years, she brings the resources and interests of larger companies to ASC.

One other parallel with entrepreneurs—Betty wears another hat at BMC. She is also vice president of research and development. In fact, the Austin facility is surpassed in the number of BMC R&D employees only by the Houston site where BMC is headquartered.

Vandegrift says, "With BMC right behind Computer Associates, Betty's [coming on board] represents the next step up the ladder." Vandegrift expects Otter-Nickerson to attract resources to ASC from the larger software companies.

"She brings the kind of credibility to the table that will let ASC evolve to the next level."

BMC's enterprise-level software is designed to support and improve the availability, performance and recovery of critical applications and data in complex computing environments. Betty's division bundles platform-specific products with related functions into single product suites.

BMC is an 18-year-old firm that opened offices in Austin in 1985. In 1991, Otter-Nickerson was quite content as the technical services manager at the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA) when a colleague suggested she

interview for a management position at BMC. LCRA was in the middle of planning its new complex. ("I was really excited about the wiring plan," she reflects.). But then her interview, scheduled for just a few hours, lasted 10 hours. "I left there knowing that all I wanted to do was get that job and run a business," she relates.

She hasn't looked back. "We treat our employees well," she declares. The personnel investments pay off. BMC is ranked second in profits per employee (behind Microsoft), 5th in sales per employee, and 4th in assets per employee in the 1997 *Forbes* 500 survey. Working

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## ASC APPOINTS INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

by Stephanie Quiroga

### MEG WILSON APPOINTED INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Following the departure of executive director Cerise Blair on January 17, the Council has appointed Meg Wilson as interim executive director. As of January 18, she has been managing the day-to-day operations of the Council during the search for a permanent replacement. She plans to improve operations of the office, provide support to all the volunteer functions of the Council, and develop long range recommendations. These recommendations are for the service profile of ASC such as policy

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Meg Wilson, Interim Executive  
Director, Austin Software Council

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## NEW LEADERSHIP TAKES ASC TO THIRD GROWTH STAGE

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for BMC's CEO Max Watson also speaks for itself—he was named one of the “1998 Top 100 CEOs” by *Chief Executive* magazine.

Although she's literally been on the road for the last two years, the Austin site just expanded into a built-to-spec building in an office complex off Jollyville Road. This, the third building that BMC occupies in Austin, is another indication of BMC's fast-paced growth. Not surprisingly, “We're always recruiting,” she says.

To recruit top-notch employees, she realized that she had to get involved with the Council. “I had just gotten back from a trip last year when I read in the paper about the ASC-UT Career Fair that had been held the day before. That was the

first time I had heard of it. And I missed it!” A UT MBA graduate, Betty had once thought she would have an advantage when recruiting at the university. But recruiting at UT takes a bit more effort, she quickly learned. More importantly, Otter-Nickerson realized that “I've got to get my eyes off the site and into the community.”

She quickly got involved in the Austin Software Council “University” (ASCU) program. She and Dale Cox, a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers, just produced the first Software Startup 101 with the help of the other ASCU deans. The course exposes students to five key areas for any software startup — marketing, legal, finance, human resources, and software

development. The intent is to provide small businesses (2-99 employees) with the basics of what venture capitalists look for.

For larger companies, Betty wants to bring war stories to the table, as well as resources and names. That's one of the reasons that she investigated getting new database software for the Council. ASC needed a tool that was more responsive to the needs of its members. One of her first actions as the new chair is to research why those who have used ASC's services have not joined and to discover why some members have not renewed their membership.

Beyond that, she's looking forward to working with the new executive director to grow the

Austin Software Council. Whether it's her management skills, her ability to juggle her employees and her family, or her past as a social worker that convinced Becky Taylor and the ASC Board to put the helm in Betty's hands, they have found a new chairperson who has the strength and charisma to make it an exciting, progressive year for the Austin Software Council.

*Emily Sopenky, ASC's newly-appointed publicity chair, is a writer specializing in emerging technologies and working with start-ups. Emily can be reached at [emily@iriscompany.com](mailto:emily@iriscompany.com).*

## SURVEY RESULTS: SATISFIED, BUT MORE SERVICES ARE WELCOME

by Emily Sopenky

Reality Research, Inc. in conjunction with the Austin Software Council conducted a member survey at the end of 1998. According to respondents, who were both members and non-members, ASC is doing a good job overall. A whopping 96% reported being satisfied with ASC.

Of the programs ASC offers, the monthly meetings are by far the most popular.

Over three-quarters of the respondents have gone to at least one meeting.

Thirty percent have taken at least one ASC “University” course. Participation in an ASC Peer Group (CEO, entrepreneur, marketing, human resources) was reported by 20%. Content for these three services and the ASC newsletter more than satisfied respondents. Surprisingly though, 20% did not use any ASC service.

The survey also asked about services that could be provided by

ASC. A very clear conclusion was that Austin software companies want ASC to act as a “throughway” on legislative information. ASC past chair Becky Taylor said, “It's significant that 85% felt that ASC should concentrate feedback from the membership to our state and national representatives on regulatory and legislative issues that affect our membership.”

Most members are small businesses with two to 100 employees with 59% of respondents having up to 20 employees in Austin. More than half actually develop software. Business issues most important to them were first, sales and marketing, second, financial, and third, human resources. Considering the nature of many startups in Austin, it is no surprise that the most important technology issue to respondents is the Internet and the Web.

In keeping with one of the four concerns identified by the 360.Alpha conference organizers,

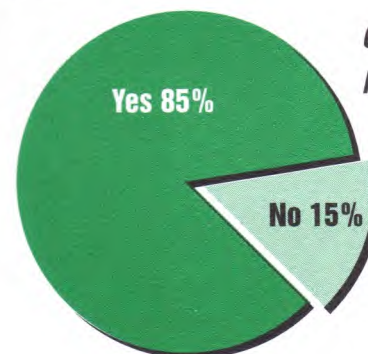
recruitment is clearly an issue. Two-thirds of the respondents felt that ASC should provide employment opportunities or at least a clearing-house for members.

Another service that 56% of the respondents would like to see is formal research on successes and failures of technology product launches. Forty-four percent wanted Web site product announcements; 43% wanted more large events.

Quite a few (60%) said they were interested in getting more involved with ASC by volunteering. This is good news for ASC's new chair, Betty Otter-Nickerson. (Now all she has to

do is find these volunteers!) One of her goals is to study the membership and determine why some have not rejoined. Robin Rather, president of Reality and CMP Media VP, a market research firm that works exclusively with the high tech industry, says she was glad that her company could help out ASC by conducting a survey. She said, “ASC has a great track record of effectiveness and we appreciate what they do for the local economy.”

For a detailed report on the survey, visit [www.austinsoftwarecouncil.org](http://www.austinsoftwarecouncil.org).



**Opinions on State and National Legislation?**

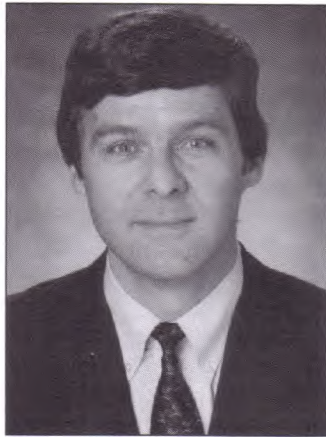
ASC/Reality Research

## ASC APPOINTS INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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advocacy, international partnering efforts, continuing education and current economic/business issues profiling efforts.

Wilson is also a lecturer in IC<sup>2</sup>'s Executive M.S. in Science and Technology Commercialization at the University of Texas. While teaching in 1997, she served as external affairs director for UT's Texas Telecommunications Policy Institute. Wilson worked at MCC for seven years as vice president for Business Development after being promoted from director of Membership. She has worked at UT commercializing university technology, and was Governor Mark White's Science and Technology coordinator. Among her current activities, Wilson is on the North Texas District Export Council and the Advisory Board for SmartGrrls. She holds a Masters of Public Affairs from the LBJ School and has lived in Austin since 1974.



*Henry W. (Hank) Jones, Program Co-chair, Austin Software Council*

### HENRY W. (HANK) JONES APPOINTED CO-CHAIR FOR ASC PROGRAMS

The Council has appointed a new co-chair for ASC programs in '99, Henry W. (Hank) Jones, III. Jones has been serving as co-chair for several months, helping his

counterpart Bill Kleinebecker find speakers and develop program topics for ASC meetings. They will continue to work together for ASC's 1999 programs, and seek input on program ideas from all ASC members and attendees.

Jones leads the Information Technology Practice of Arnold, White & Durkee, a six-city law firm. At Arnold, White & Durkee, he focuses on Internet commerce, software, intellectual property, distribution, licensing, marketing, sales, alliances, international business, outsourcing, Year 2000 issues, insurance, preventive law, and new technologies and business practices.

Jones has served on the senior management teams of three vendors before moving to Austin last September. He has handled blended legal and business roles at Ashton-Tate (the 2nd micro software IPO), QMS, and most recently as vice president of Intellectual Property Development at U.S. Robotics. He previously served on the board of directors of the Southeastern Software Association (the Atlanta version of ASC). Jones has guest taught at UT's IC<sup>2</sup> and other Austin groups, and chaired programs at COMDEX, The Software Mergers & Acquisitions Institute, The Computer Law Association, and other national events. Altogether, Jones has worked with over 70 software companies and claims he'll be in a band before he's 50.

### EMILY SOPENSKY APPOINTED PUBLICITY CHAIR

The Council has appointed Emily Sopenisky as the new Publicity Chair. Her responsibilities include promoting ASC and serving as editor of the *Austin Software Leader*. Emily is well acquainted with the publication having been a regular contributor for the past two years.



*Emily Sopenisky, Publicity Chair, Austin Software Council*

Sopenisky writes for and about businesses, especially startups and those in emerging technologies. An award-winning author, she is a regular contributor to *Texas Software News* as well as the *Austin Software Leader*. You can see a sampling of her products and topics at [www.iriscompany.com](http://www.iriscompany.com), her company's Web page.

She received her B.A. in business from a small Pennsylvania college and her MBA from The Wharton School. She worked for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the U.S. Department of Commerce in Washington DC before heading down to Texas in 1983 where they don't ask "Why?" but instead ask "Why not?" She can be reached at [emily@iriscompany.com](mailto:emily@iriscompany.com) or 452-2448.

*Stephanie Quiroga recently moved to Austin to join Socket Public Relations, a strategic public relations and marketing agency for high-tech companies. She can be reached at [squiroga@socketpr.com](mailto:squiroga@socketpr.com).*

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*Bill Mueller*